

FORESTRY AND FOREST STEWARDSHIP

There are about 51,000 forested acres in the Rural Forest Focus areas of King County. These areas form a buffer between the cities and the working and protected forests of the Cascade foothills, and are held predominately by private landowners in parcels between 5 and 20 acres in size. Though privately owned, these forested lands provide multiple public benefits to the region, including flood control, habitat for fish and wildlife, including the federally listed Chinook salmon, a local source of timber and non-timber forest products, and amenity values.

Every private forest owner's set of property goals is unique, and may include wildlife habitat enhancement, recreational uses, a place of refuge and solitude, periodic timber



harvest, or simply the maintenance of a healthy forest. Many owners of these lands are recent "urban transplants" who lack a basic understanding about forest function, health and management.

In partnership with the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks and the Washington Department of Natural Resources, WSU King County Extension con-

ducts **Forest Stewardship Coached Planning** classes for rural landowners. These eight-week classes provide up-to-date information and hands-on instruction in ecology, soil and water resources, forest management, and many other topics. Participants develop their own written Forest Stewardship Plan with guidance from the instructors.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Engage small forest landowners in making informed choices about the stewardship of their forests taking into account their individual objectives and ecological principles.
- Promote the economic and ecological viability of small-scale forestry.
- Promote awareness among non-forest owners of the ecological, economic and social value of private forests on the local landscape.

Since 1999, **over 400 individuals representing over 300 households and more than 6,000 acres** have taken part in Forest Stewardship Coached Planning courses. Many have submitted Forest Stewardship Plans to become eligible for Forestlands, Timberlands, or Public Benefit Rating System tax incentive programs. Others have completed stewardship plans to benefit from having written documentation of their goals, objectives, resources, and implementation strategies. Still others take the classes simply to learn more about their property.

In 2005, Forest Stewardship classes were conducted in Bellevue, Vashon and Covington. **Plans encompassing 185 forested acres in rural King County** have been completed by this year's class participants, with many additional plans in progress.



Students examine a core taken from a tree to assess the forest's age and growth history.

Photo A. Grotta

In addition, WSU King County Extension conducts workshops which provide landowners with practical knowledge and "how-to's" to implement their forest stewardship goals. In 2005, the workshops focused on reforestation and thinning.

Comments from Forest Stewardship Class Participants

"I took this class to gain familiarity with our family property so that I could participate in conversations about it in an educated way."

"This class took away some of the trepidation I had about somehow making a big mistake."

"I realized that I could materially enhance the diversity of both plants and wildlife on my property. I thought initially that I would have to leave everything alone."

"We liked the enthusiasm of the instructors, and their lack of political agendas."

Helping forest landowners achieve their goals; helping the region by promoting healthy and productive forest lands

2005 Program Accomplishments:

- Over 100 people representing over 60 different households or ownerships participated in the three Forest Stewardship Coached Planning classes in Bellevue, Vashon and Covington. Together, these participants own over 1700 forested acres. 80 King County parcels totaling 873 acres were represented in the classes in 2005.
- By year's end, 22 Forest Stewardship Plans were written by class participants and in the process of being approved by King County and/or the Washington Department of Natural Resources.
- A database of small-scale and portable sawmill operators in Western Washington was developed and launched on the Web in May. The website (<http://ext.nrs.wsu.edu/forestryext/sawmill/>) continues to receive over 300 visitors per month.
- 37 people attended a Tree Planting Workshop in January. They learned about how to evaluate a planting site, select seedlings, choose tools and equipment, plant correctly, protect trees from predators, and monitor for success. The program attracted a diverse audience of landowners, professionals, and stewardship volunteers.
- 35 people attended a Thinning for Forest Health workshop in July. They learned about how thinning improves habitat values and forest function, saw state-of-the-art equipment in action, and saw an excellent example of a collaborative project which will improve fire safety, forest diversity, and economic return for the participating landowners.



A Tolt River Highlands landowner describes his community's forest planning efforts to Forest Stewardship program participants.

Photo A. Grotta

Future Plans:

- Develop a Summer Youth Forestry Institute for high school students to learn about forestry, develop job skills, and collect inventory data on working forest lands owned by King County. A proposal has been submitted for funding of this program, which will be piloted in 2007.
 - Seek opportunities for outreach to landowners in south King County, who historically have been underrepresented in Forest Stewardship programming. A workshop on management of young forests is tentatively planned for 2006 in this region.
- A statewide survey of past Forest Stewardship program participants will be implemented in 2006 to evaluate whether landowners are implementing the stewardship practices they learn about in the course. This survey will provide important information about the effectiveness of the program in improving forest stewardship.



Workshop attendees watch a tree planting demonstration.

Photo A. Grotta

Amy Grotta
Extension Educator
(206) 205-3132
Amy.Grotta@metrokc.gov

WSU King County Extension
919 SW Grady Way, Suite 120
Renton, WA 98055-2980
<http://www.metrokc.gov/wsu-ce/forestry>

